brain cells fried like hamburger....

Union Men faked concern. They were disappeared....

*****

Trixie demanded a bargain. Paying the difference between the reasonable price Johnny asked for a waterfall dresser and her insanely low offer, with what she considered her incomparable charm. Only it didn't work, on Johnny....

She wanted to grab that barrel-shaped table-leg, and screw him with it....

Instead, she picked up a wooden Pepsi box from outside. She had a stainless-steel gadget in her other hand. She asked Johnny what it was for. He didn't know; maybe French-fries. She said she thought that was a very good guess.

She asked him how much he'd charge for something like that.

Like that, but not that? Johnny wondered.

He said, maybe five dollars.

She became ecstatic; she'd just bought it, down Thing Street, for two.

Then she asked him how much he wanted for the box.

Suddenly he saw her strategy; she was a conniver, probably a thief as well. She'd say she bought his whole Thing Store, down the street. There was another one, exactly like it. Multiple personalities, multiple stores....

He said, a hundred bucks.

Romeo, Romeo....

Praetorius showed up. Her personal manager. He said, forget the box. He wanted that fan over there, gleaming, with dials, buttons, and knobs, like Eel's Positron, or a Theremin....

Really cool, after their nightly contortions....

It was on top of a display case full of shit. It was beautiful. It had twin fans like airplane turbines, with stainless steel blades in a silver-gray frame, like a Samsonite suitcase.

It had very generously spaced bars, on the grill, ideal for dicing children's fingers, and flinging them all over the living-room.

It was G.E. Edison's Company!

Gimme, said Praetorius. He was perched on a metal folding-chair. He'd rolled up his trousers, for that Tom Sawyer in Panama look.

No, said Johnny. He wanted it for the store, which was fast becoming known as the Thing Street Hell-Kitchen....

How much, demanded Praetorius.

That one's not for sale, Johnny said.